

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3303

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6830

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: BREZHNEV'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE ON APRIL 30 AND MAY 1

REF: MOSCOW 6797, MOSCOW 6724

1. JUDGING FROM THE TELEVISION REPLAY OF HIS APRIL 30 APPEARANCE AT THE LIKACHEV AUTO PLANT, BREZHNEV LOOKED CONSIDERABLY BETTER THAN HE DID AT GRECHKO'S FUNERAL THE DAY BEFORE. BUT IN COMPARISON WITH HIS APPEARANCE AT THE 25TH CONGRESS, THE RIGHT SIDE OF HIS FACE JUST BELOW THE CHEEKBONE SEEM SWOLLEN AND RELATIVELY DEPLY LINED. THE FLESH BELOW HIS JAW, PARTICULARLY ON THE RIGTH SIDE, SEEMED MORE SAGGING AND LOOSE THAN AT THE CONGRESS.

2. HIS PERFORMANCE IN DELIVERING AN APPROXIMATELY 50-MINUTE SPEECH WAS CONSIDERABLY BELOW HIS SHOWING AT THE 25TH CONGRESS. ON APRIL 30 HE APPEARED TO LACK THE ENERGY HE DISPLAYED AT THE CONGRESS, AND HIS DICTION WAS MARKEDLY WORSE. HE SLURRED MANY WORDS. ON TWO OCCASIONS TOWARD THE END OF THE SPEECH HE SEEMED TO SUFFER BRIEF MENTAL LAPSES. HIS GESTURES WERE SLOW AND FORCED. THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS SPEECH IS REPORTED SEPTTEL.

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3. BEFORE DELIVERING THE SPEECH BREZHNEV WALKED THROUGH

PART OF THE FACTORY AND SEVERAL TIMES STAPPED TO CHAT WITH WORKERS. HIS MOVEMENTS APPEARED TO BE NORMAL, AND WE HAD THE IMPRESSION HE WAS MAKING A SPECIAL EFFORT TO LOOK ANIMATED AND ENERGETIC. AFTER THE SPEECH HE HAD A DIFFICULT TIME PINNING A MEDAL ON THE FACTORY'S FLAG--INDEED THE TV CAMERA FINALLY CUT AWAY WHILE HE WAS STILL ATTEMPTING TO AFFIX THE MEDAL IN THE PROPER PLACE.

4. BREZHNEV LOOKED MUCH BETTER -- BOTH IN PERSON AND ON TELEVISION -- AT THE MAY 1 RED SQUARE PARADE. HE APPEARED TO BE RELAXED AND ANIMATED THROUGHOUT THE TWO-HOUR EVENT. TV COVERAGE INCLUDED SEVERAL CLOSE-UP SHOTS OF HIS FACE--MUCH CLOSER THAN DURING GRECHKO'S FUNERAL OR THE FACTORY VISIT. HIS FACE STILL SEEMED MORE FLESHY AND LINED THAN AT THE CONGRESS--ADMITTEDLY, IN MUCH DIFFERENT LIGHTING. BUT HIS APPEARANCE WAS DEFINITELY IMPROVED FROM THAT OF APRIL 29 AND 30.
STOESSEL

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